

Are other crop improvement techniques overtaking GMOs?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

This may come as a surprise to many outside farming, who must have got the impression, quite wrongly, that the only exciting new crops being bred nowadays are GM crops.

In fact, the exciting new crops that are being bred and actually used by farmers are almost all non-GM. In particular, crop breeders are using our new knowledge of crop DNA, and the functions of specific genes in a crop's genome, to greatly accelerate the process of breeding new crops with desirable characteristics.

The technique, called Marker Assisted Selection or MAS, has proved phenomenally successful. . . Indeed, some of these crops have been so successful that proponents of GM have taken to claiming, from time to time, that these crops are actually genetically modified when they are not.

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. . . the economics of crop breeding and the practical problems of farming with GM crops mean that the technology is rapidly running out of steam.

This is illustrated by the announcement in the last few days that BASF, a major player in developing GM crops for many years, is now, as their press release delicately puts it, 'refocusing its plant biotechnology research portfolio and will restructure its Plant Science operations'.

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If recent developments in alternative crop breeding technologies, and commercial decisions by companies like BASF, do not mark the death of GM, they certainly confirm that GM is in the grip of a serious and ultimately terminal illness. The real questions are these. Just how long GM will take to die? How many further environmental problems it will cause before it's finished?

Read full, original post: [The demise of GM and the new future of food](#)